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CRT and the Critical Analysis of Gender, Sexuality and Blackness in Sport
Excerpts from *Contesting 'Race' and Sport: Shaming the Colour Line*

In this commentary, I draw on salient sections of my forthcoming book *Contesting 'Race' and Sport: Shaming the colour line* (Hylton, 2018) to illuminate some of the contributions that Critical Race Theory can offer for critical analyses of sexuality, blackness and sport. I use the issue of leadership in sport to emphasise, that in a context where women are poorly represented, Black men and Black women are even further behind. Yet even here, Black women tend to be even less conspicuous as leaders than their Black male counterparts. We know very little of what has been described as a *double burden,* the way *'race' and* gender play out in sport (Jean and Feagin, 1998). This oversight in the literature is reflected at all levels and thus produces skewed representations of marginalisation where intersections of 'race', gender and class are considered separately (Bruno Massao and Fasting, 2014). Explanations for this include the paucity of Black women as leaders in sport, their absence as knowledge formers in the academy, their marginality in studies of 'race', gender and identities, and the relative absence as the subjects of knowledge through their shared experience. This also speaks to the under-utilised work of Black feminism and the peripheral application of intersectionality in sport and leisure theorising.

Mowatt et al. (2013) and Mirza (2006) argue that contradictions depict the perception of Black women as their *hypervisibility* as stereotyped bodies is juxtaposed with their *invisibility* in the academy, in research, and in certain roles and spaces. Invisibility in the academy means few challenges to the hypervisibility of disempowering stereotypes that range from the 'angry black woman', nurturing subordinate images, and hyper-sexualised representations (Carter-Francique et al., 2011). Mowatt et al. (2013: 647) argue that,

> If leisure studies is to expand theory and research to explore Black women's realities, prioritizing knowledge by Black women themselves, and adopting a theoretical framework to contextualise these realities becomes particularly paramount.

I write in my book that Du Bois (1994: 1) announced that *the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line.* His words have not gone unheeded in sport and it is argued here that 'race' continues to be one of the most significant problems of the Twenty First Century. There are relentless accounts of racism in sport that continue the relevance of these words within and without its domain. Yet Du Bois' idea of *the veil* hints at more than these overt manifestations of odious behaviours, it points to more subtle, systemic and structural racialized forms of oppression that require concentrated levels of critical consciousness to isolate, explain, and disrupt.

Du Bois speaks of a double consciousness that he became conscious of as a result of being Othered at a very early age. The outcome of early traumatic events led to him recognizing that he was viewed differently by those racialised as White in the public domain. He argued that they drew on negative racialised behaviours, tropes and characteristics that delineated his identity from the majority White community just as Shuford (2001) more specifically describes 'race' as a construct for defining and locating people through imposed racialized categories, and for the allocation of resources. The veil signifies a position of racial consciousness for many that reveal the significance of 'race' and gender in sport and society and the insidious nature of discrimination (Bell, 1992).

For Du Bois, a 'veil' hung between him and the dominant whiteness that he experienced. It was emphasised by the privileges and supremacy of whiteness and those with the power to Other him. Living within the veil offered security and purview from which to observe and strategise how to navigate the racialised society outside. The veil also emphasized the racialized fractures found more generally across society where sport is but one contested domain (Winant, 2004, Carrington, 2013). Further, Du Bois' (1994) striving to become an African AND an American is a fight against a forced hybridity that hints at processes that include and exclude in the way that everyday business is regularly conducted (Werbner and Modood, 1997, Giardina, 2003, Ratna, 2007a).

Many scholars have argued for sport, 'race', gender and sexuality to be taken seriously amidst claims of it seamlessly mimicking dilemmas in other social settings. For example, sport's racialized dynamics affect, and are affected by, wider discourses, ideologies, structures, issues and controversies (Carrington, 2013, Burdsey et al., 2013, van Sterkenburg et al., 2010, Klugman and Osmond, 2013, Testa and Amara, 2016). The symbolism of sport

for diasporic communities makes it more than whimsy (Burdsey et al., 2013) and its analysis requiring a shift from the '*toy department of human affairs'* (Edwards, 1979: 116) to a clear recognition that *sport matters (Zirin, 2007).* Like Zirin (2007), Edwards (1979) supports the view of others today whom implicate sporting arenas in recreating and faithfully sustaining how racialized dynamics play out elsewhere (Farrington et al., 2015, Poulton and Durell, 2014, Lawrence, 2014). At the same time, sporting arenas are capable of challenging behaviours, attitudes, and customs where thoughtful practice is harnessed (UN, 2013, Long and Spracklen, 2011).

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

The praxis of CRT reminds me of two observations, one came from Martin Luther King Jnr who said, *In the end we will not remember the words of our enemies but the silence of our friends* and the second is a comment from (Hutnyk, 1997) who argued that, it is well and good to theorise the diaspora, the post-colony and the hybrid but where this is never interrupted by the necessity of political work it remains a vote for the status quo. Critical Race Theory signals the incompleteness of sport and leisure theorising and practice where broad discussions on 'race' have inconsistently factored-in these social issues (Hylton, 2005, Hylton, 2010, Hylton and Lawrence, 2016, Hylton and Morpeth, 2012). Yet CRT can be used as a cross-disciplinary compass to guide a critical approach to sport and leisure analyses. An approach to sport and leisure that has had me transfixed by what Gaertner and Dovidio (2005) would describe as the tension between public commitments to equality, systemic discrimination and bigotry, and the ongoing struggle against racialized inequalities and disparities.

Using the metaphor of a camera, Zamudio et al. (2011) and Solorzano (2013) emphasise the essential elements of a critical social theory. Solorzano (2013) argues that theory is like a polarizing filter in a camera that focuses the eye to eliminate the glare from a window so that we can see what the eye cannot. Zamudio et al. (2011) use the notion of theory as a model to frame and interpret society like a good photographer's image that omits extraneous detail. Using CRT to see a problem clearly, and therefore to see through that problem, is the role of any critical theoretical tool. Where Zamudio et al. (2011) agree with Solorzano (2013) that *a theory is a lens through which we observe and interpret social life,* Solorzano (2013) goes further to stress that a pure concentration on observing and interpreting is not likely to bring

substantive change. He proceeds to the conclusion that,

> CRT is an explanatory framework that accounts for the role of race and racism [and] works toward challenging racism as part of a larger goal of identifying and challenging all forms of subordination.
> (Solorzano, 2013)

Critical Race Theory in sport enables a concentrated focus on racialized problematics. CRT is a useful tool to reveal a clearer understanding of the dialectic of 'race', sport and society to facilitate a critique of complex personal, cultural, institutional and structural arrangements. Where racialised processes, formations, meanings and consequences are of concern CRT can function as an organizing critical framework from which to focus our approach to them. Scholars focused on previously marginalised ideas in regards to blackness, gender and sexuality can draw on a lexicon where 'race' and its intersections cannot be ignored. Where we have the ability to see racism, racial inequalities and disparities that litter our everyday interactions in a more sophisticated, nuanced and empowering way where we are more likely to reveal solutions and challenges to them.

There are core tenets or assumptions that are frequently cited that help to define CRT. Though some activist scholars will focus on some more than others there are common tenets cited in each case:

1. The centrality and permanence of 'race' and racism and their intersections with other forms of subordination
2. A challenge to dominant ideologies of meritocracy, colourblindness, race neutrality, objectivity and ahistoricism.
3. A commitment to social justice and the disruption of negative racial relations.
4. Transdisciplinarity that fosters disciplinary cross pollination and syntheses.
5. The centrality of experiential knowledge and 'voice'.
   (see Rollock and Gillborn, 2011, CCRC, 2003, Hylton, 2015, Hylton et al., 2011, Burdsey, 2011a, Gillborn, 2009, Delgado and Stenfancic, 2012, Delgado, 2012, Parker et al., 1999, Crenshaw et al., 1995, Wing, 2003, Lynn, 2005, Bell, 1992, Matsuda et al., 1993).

Add to this some of the popular CRT critiques of whiteness, interest convergence, microaggressions, intersectionality, critical race feminism and the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory reveals itself as a powerful intellectual tool (Bonilla-Silva, 2010, Gillborn, 2009, Delgado and Stefancic, 1997, Picca and Feagin, 2007, Sue, 2010, Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016, Dixson and Rousseau, 2006).

Take for example the way CRT draws on intersectionality as it centres 'race'. Ospina and Foldy (2009) reveal four key issues in relation to 'race' and ethnicity in leadership that emerge contrary to the relative success of Black people in many domains of sport and society; 1) 'race' is an everyday concern or fault line, 2) where leadership is researched, context is rarely addressed, 3) diversity in the workforce is under-valued and misunderstood, and 4) a focus on 'race' helps to explain the place of institutionalised power in perpetuating inequalities and privileges. Within this context, women are under-represented in leadership and coaching, and Black women are even further behind in this regard (Norman, 2010, Carter-Francique et al., 2011). To complicate matters, diversity in sport management has a tendency to emphasise the experiences of Black men in regard to 'race' and White women where gender is concerned, thus emphasising the relative novelty of the lived experiences of Black women (Borland and Bruening, 2010, Jean and Feagin, 1998, Bruno Massao and Fasting, 2014, Scraton, 2001).

In regards to the trope of the 'angry black woman', Mowatt et al. (2013: 652) state that Black women often face, racism, sexism, and cultural insensitivity. They argue that, when they voice their opinions about issues, they are labeled as troublemakers', the fact that these are core traits of a leadership position in sport present a serious problem for Black women in sport. Mowatt et al. (2013), outline how Black professionals found their work being devalued, especially where there is a focus on 'race', ethnicity, and diversity. The notion of feeling 'overexposed' in regard to these issues emerged through their experiencing of microaggressions (Burdsey, 2011b, Sue, 2010). The penchant for Black professionals to champion issues of 'race', or to be given the responsibility of being 'the race person' in their institution was reflected in the disparities between those involved in implementing such roles and those who are not. Further, Black women, engaged in this type of work resonated with caring, nurturing 'mammy' stereotypes, therefore being perceived differently to their Black male counterparts or White women excepted from such characterization.

It is generally agreed that the norm for leadership research has tended to reinforce perceptions that leaders are in the main male, and White (Logan, 2011). Those that do not fit the prototype are absorbed into these analyses while we learn little about their qualities, experiences and diversity. The contention that Black women as leaders has been the result of little interest in the professions and in sport is the subject of debate (Sanchez-Hucles and Davis, 2010). We know little about their journeys nor their specific contexts from entry to the more senior levels. The marginalisation of Black people at the highest levels of society as leaders is mimicked in sport where prototypes and stereotypes are reinforced in a recursive fashion. For Logan (2011), we still know little about how Black women manage their relative isolation, with fewer mentors and networks. What leadership qualities they may bring to these career pathways and what these strengths reveal about particular forms of leaders, character and their contribution to teams and organisations. It is understood that gender does imprint itself on perceptions of leadership, though where the synthesis of sexism and 'race' and intersecting forms of discrimination add complexity to the leadership experience it is only just beginning to be understood (Sanchez-Hucles and Davis, 2010, Borland and Bruening, 2010). Thus, sport leadership and coaching contexts for Black women must not be viewed interchangeably with those of White women especially as competing identities for women will manifest in different ways through uncritical views of leaders and leadership.

Sanchez-Hucles and Davis (2010) add that where women face discrimination it can sometimes be more complicated for Black women to document the reasons behind their grievances as racism and gendered racism obfuscate already tortuous terrain (Bruno Massao and Fasting, 2014, Carter-Francique et al., 2011). If White men, who in sport occupy the highest positions, are more inclined to accept White women ahead of Black women in leadership positions then not only do we see gendered racism at play but also how the beneficiaries of the privileges of whiteness can emerge at all levels of leadership pathways (Sanchez-Hucles and Davis, 2010). Logan (2011: 443) argues that such dynamics describe processes that make,

> White leadership appear normal, neutral, and natural, rather than the result of racialized practices…the White leader prototype is theorized as an ideological discursive formation, organising professional roles along hierarchical, racial lines.

Therefore, demonstrating the benefits of adopting an intersectional rather than an additive *multiple marginalized identities* analysis of leadership in sport research (Bowleg, 2008). There are a number of examples where Black women and leadership has been incorporated into studies that extend our knowledge of 'race' and leadership (White, 2010, Sanchez-Hucles and Davis, 2010, Curtis, 2014). In my book I illustrate how White (2010) is an example of how inclusive research on leadership can further our knowledge of diverse leadership experiences while recognising the political contract necessary for such work to be conducted. Similarly, Curtis (2014: 62) argues that research on 'race' and leadership, especially where Black women are central, enables 'new voices' to emerge while 'sharing absent realities'. As this diversity benefits the academy while challenging its dominant epistemologies the experiences of Black leaders become part of the leadership narrative that is valued.

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